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A CRITICAL  
EXPOSITION

OF THE  
NINTH CHAPTER  
OF THE

Epistle to the ROMANS,

As far as is supposed to relate to the Doctrine  
of PREDESTINATION.

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By J. FAWCETT.

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*Judge not according to Appearance, but judge righteous Judgment,  
John vii. 24.*


*For there is no Respect of Persons with God. Rom. ii. 11.*

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L O N D O N,

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AS it has been always an establish'd  
Rule in interpreting *Scripture* to have  
a constant Regard to the End and  
Design of the *Writer*; that we may be the  
more thoroughly satisfied as to the true and  
genuine Sense of the present *Chapter*, let us,  
by way of Introduction, take a View of the  
general Scope of the whole *Epistle*, and espe-  
cially of the most speculative Part of it, as  
contain'd in the first *Eleven Chapters*. The  
Apostle's grand Design throughout the Whole  
is, to explain and establish the Christian Doc-

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trine

trine of *Justification*, or the *Righteousness of God*, which is by *Faith of Jesus Christ* unto all, and upon all them that believe (a).

For which Purpose he begins, in the *First Chapter*, with considering the Case of the *Gentiles*, whom he shews to have miserably deviated from the Law of *Nature*. He then goes on, in the *Second*, to consider the Case of the *Jews*, whom he likewise proves to be guilty of transgressing the Law of *Moses*; and thence concludes, in the *Third*, that as both *Jews* and *Gentiles* were all under *Sin*, they could therefore neither of them be *justified* by the several Laws they were under, by both of which they severally stood *condemned*, and from which *Condemnation* they could only be freed by that gracious *Law of Faith*, which God had equally propounded for the *Justification* of all Men, whether *Jews* or *Gentiles*, without any *Difference*. It was by this Method, as he shews, in the *Fourth*, that *Abraham* himself, the great *Father* of the *Faithful*, was *justified*; and that it was not his keeping the *Law of Circumcision*, but his *Faith*, that was *imputed* unto him for *Righteousness*, as it likewise shall be unto us, if we believe on him that raised up *Jesus* our Lord from the *Dead*, who was delivered for our *Offences*, and raised again for our *Justification*. Which very Method, says he, Chapter  
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(a) Chap. iii. 22.

*the Fifth*, is the most agreeable that can be to the Manner in which we first *fell*; for as it was *by the Offence of one*, to wit, *Adam*, that *the Judgment* first came upon all Men unto *Condemnation of Death*, so the Wisdom of God has appointed, that it shall be *by the Righteousness of one*, even *Christ*, that the *free Gift* shall come upon all Men unto *Justification of Life*. He then goes on, in the *Sixth*, to guard against some *Abuses*, which some ill-disposed Persons might be ready to make of this Doctrine, as if, because they were not under the *Law*, but under *Grace*, they might therefore *continue in Sin*: Which he effectually answers, by shewing that this does not follow; because the *Law of Faith*, or of *Grace*, tho' it was such indeed as would justify *Sinners*, or else none could be justified by it, yet was not such as would justify on any such Terms as these. For, *Know ye not*, says he, *that to whom ye yield yourselves Servants to obey, his Servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of Sin unto Death, or of Obedience unto Righteousness*, or the attaining to *Justification*? He then again proceeds further, in the *Seventh Chapter*, to address himself more peculiarly to his *Jewish Brethren*, and to shew the Insufficiency of their *Law* to *justify*, by taking upon himself the Character of a Person *under it*, and of one really desirous to attain to be *justified by it*; and by



shewing, that how willing soever any Person might be to *fulfil* it ; yet such in Fact was the Weakness of human Nature, that the *Law in the Members* would war against *that of the Mind*, and often bring him into *Captivity to the Law of Sin*, insomuch that after his utmost Endeavours he would have Reason at last to cry out, *O wretched Man that I am ! who shall deliver me from the Body of this Death ?* and to rejoice at being able to subjoin, as the *Apostle* here does, *I thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord.* The *Eighth Chapter* contains *Inferences* from the aforesaid Doctrine, together with some rapturous and triumphant Expressions of the happy Condition of *Christians*, and the glorious Hopes and Prospects set before them. The *Ninth, Tenth, and Eleventh*, are a continued *Vindication* of the same Doctrine against certain *Objections*, which either were, or were likely to be, made against it ; and he begins to conclude, in the *Twelfth*, as his Manner is in his *other Epistles*, with *Exhortations* to, and *Instructions* for, an Holy and *Christian Life*.

Having thus briefly considered the *Apostle's* Design in the Whole, let us now apply ourselves more directly to the *Chapter* under Consideration, the more immediate Subject of the present Argument. The *Eighth* then, as before observ'd, being expressive of the  
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happy and glorious Condition of *Christians*, it is but natural to suppose it must put him in Mind of *his Brethren, his Kinsmen according to the Flesh*, and as such lead him to lament their Unhappiness, who by their *Unbelief* had depriv'd themselves of all this Blessings, and lost their Part in the *Messiah's* Kingdom.

He therefore begins, in the *Ninth*, with expressing his tender Regard for them, and the extreme *Grief* which he had for their rejecting the *Christian* Scheme, and being themselves, as he insinuates, rejected for it. It may be doubted indeed, whether what he had said in the *Eighth*, or was going to say in the *Ninth*, was the Occasion of this *Declaration*. But be this as it will, or be it either one or both of them, the *Chapter* begins with a most serious and solemn Affirmation of his very great and affectionate Concern for them. *I say the Truth*, says he, *in Christ, I lye not, my Conscience also bearing me Witness in the Holy Ghost, that I have great Heaviness and continual Sorrow in my Heart: For I could wish (were it proper, and would it avail to procure their Salvation) that myself were Anathema \* from Christ for my Brethren,*

\* As this Word may be interpreted either of a Person devoted to *eternal*, or only to some present and *temporal* Destruction, it is therefore left to the Reader to understand it as he shall think best. *Note*, also, that *from* may likewise be rendered by.

*thren, my Kinsmen according the Flesh : Who are Israelites ; to whom pertaineth the Adoption (the Honour of God's first-born), and the Glory (of the Shechinah), and the Covenants (made with Abraham and Moses), and the giving of the Law, and the (true) Service of God, and the Promises ; whose are the Fathers ; and of whom, as concerning the Flesh, Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen (b).*

The *Apostle* not only professes his *Regard* for them, but he lays down the *Reasons* and *Grounds* of it : He acknowledges their *Privileges*, and enumerates the *Honours* with which God had crowned them. But from hence arises a very obvious *Objection*, and which the *Apostle* must either invalidate, or leave the *Jews* at last to triumph over him. For if this, say they, be the Case, why do you teach us a Doctrine so opposite ? If ours, as you own, be the *Promises*, how can you represent us as a People *rejected* ? Have you forgot the Promises God made our *Fathers* to choose their *Seed* for his *peculiar People* ? Or can you think these Promises of *none Effect* ? We do not indeed seek to be justified in the Manner which you are contending for ; but should not this be an Argument, that your Doctrine must therefore be false, since it in-

(b) See Matt. xxviii. 18. John iii. 35. Eph. i. 22. 1 Cor. xv. 27. and Heb. i. 8, 9.



fers the *Rejection* of those, whom God himself has declared he has *chosen*? This Objection is obviated in the Words which immediately follow, *Not as tho' the Word of God hath taken none Effect*: And the Clearing of this, we must therefore, in Reason, conclude to be the very Point the *Apostle* is here upon.

There are those, who conceive, that the *Apostle*, having intimated, in the Beginning of the *Chapter*, the *Rejection* of the *Jews*, and the Calling of the *Gentiles* in their room and stead, takes upon him, in the Remainder, to open to the World the *original Spring* of this; to wit, the *absolute Purpose and Decree of God*, by which, without any Regard to the Actions or Works of Men he *elects* and *reprobates* just whom he pleases. But that this is no Part of the Design of this *Chapter*, must, I think, be apparent from the following Considerations:

FIRST, Such a Doctrine as this could have no manner of Tendency to convince the *Jews* of what the *Apostle* plainly wanted to convince them; which was, of the Truth of the Gospel of *Christ*, and of his being the *End of the Law for Righteousness*, or Justification, unto every one that believes. For what has the Doctrine of an *absolute Election* to do with this? Or how will it prove, even supposing it allowed of on both Sides, either that the *Apostle* was right in embracing the  
*Christian*

*Christian Faith*, or the *Jews* in the *wrong* in rejecting it? But now, if the *Apostle* can make it appear from the *Law* itself, as we shall presently see that he does, that such as are *Christians* are really *Abraham's Seed*, and *Heirs* according to the *Promise* made to him, such Reasoning as this must as plainly appear to his Purpose, as the other appears to be foreign to any such Thing.

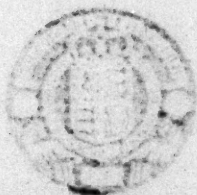
Nay, so far is it, in the *SECOND Place*, from having any Tendency to convert them to the *Christian Faith*, that it has rather a Tendency to keep them from it, and to harden them still in their Error. For, admitting, say they, that there is such a particular *Election* as that you speak of, are there any so likely to be the Objects of this as *ourselves*? Are not *we* the true Seed of *Abraham*, the Friend of God? And if you say, that the Promise is not to all his Seed, but only to such of them as should spring from *Isaac*, this will conclude indeed against the Sons of *Ishmael*, but makes nothing at all against us, the Sons of *Isaac*. And if you again make Exceptions, with regard to the Sons of *Isaac*, and allege that God loved *Jacob*, but hated *Esau*, we are not descended from *Esau*, but from that very *Jacob* you speak of, that *Jacob* God says he had loved. What End can you therefore propose in citing Scriptures which tend thus plainly to your own Confusion?

fufion? We are not only the Descendants of *Abraham*, but of *Isaac*, and *Jacob* too; the *Laws* we observe, and which we seek to be *justified* by, were given by God himself to the Prophet *Moses*; and therefore if there be such an *Election*, and *Reprobation*, as that you mention, is it not much more likely, that *we* should be God's Elect, than such Apostates from the Law as *yourself*, who, forsaking a Law, that was given by Divine Authority, have set up new Laws, and new Doctrines, and by which, as you pretend, we stand condemn'd? Is it not easy to see, that such an Election of *Isaac* and *Jacob* would be so far from serving the *Apostle's* Purpose, that it would only be giving the *Jews* an Advantage against him? Nor will the Scriptures here cited, if explain'd in this Sense, be of any Service to *answer*, but rather *confirm* their Objections; which may sufficiently prove, that this is neither the Sense nor Design of them; but, on the contrary, to confirm his main Doctrine of Justification by *Faith*, and not of *Works*, as we shall see more at large in the Sequel.

I add, THIRDLY, That the *Apostle* himself, when he comes to give us the Substance of what he had been saying before, as he does in the End of the *Chapter*, not only takes no Notice of any such Doctrine, as some suppose he had been just contending for; but,

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agreeably





agreeably to what we have said was his true End and Aim in it, concludes in the following manner :

*What shall we say then? Or what is to be concluded from what we have said, but this? That the Gentiles, which followed not after Righteousness, have attained to Righteousness, even the Righteousness which is of Faith : But Israel, which followed after the Law of Righteousness, hath not attained to the Law of Righteousness. And wherefore, says the Apostle, have they not attained to it? Is it because God eternally decreed they should not? There is nothing like this to be met with, but, agreeably to his Argument, he gives us this very good Reason for it : Because they sought it, not by Faith, but as it were by the Works of the Law : For they stumbled at that Stumbling-stone, the Meanness and Death of Christ, as it is written, and foretold in their Scriptures, Behold, I lay in Sion a Stumbling-stone, and Rock of Offence : And whosoever believeth on him, shall not be ashamed. After which, he goes on, in the succeeding Chapter, to assert his Desire and Prayer for his Brethrens Salvation, in a manner highly consistent with Christian Faith and Charity, but as inconsistent, as can well be imagined, for one who had just been asserting, that they were irretrievably doom'd to Destruction, in the Manner that some represent him.*

And,



And, *Lastly*, The very Words of the *Chapter* itself will very naturally and kindly fall in with this Design, to prove and confirm the Truth of the *Christian* Scheme, and to convince the *Jews* of the Danger of disbelieving it: Whereas the contrary Sense of them has not only nothing to do with the *Apostle's* Purpose, but, as before observed, must rather make against him, and tend to *destroy* what he makes it his Care to *defend*.

Having thus briefly endeavour'd to settle the *Scope* of the *Chapter*, let us now consider the *Apostle's* Argument. And to begin again, where we left off; an *Objection* being hinted, as already shewn, the *Apostle* immediately prepares to answer it. The *Objection* is, that if God should reject the *Jews*, as *Paul* had intimated, the *Word of God* must be of *none Effect*. To which he answers, by observing, that *all are not Israel that are of Israel*; that is, that all that are descended from the Loins of the Patriarch *Jacob*, to whom the Name of *Israel* was given, are not that true *Israel* that God intended should be Heirs of the Promises made to him; *neither, because they are the Seed of Abraham*, says he, *are they therefore all Children* in the Sense intended, or such as God meant in the Promise recorded in *Genesis*, to be a God to *him*, and to his *Seed* for ever (c); for he himself

(c) Gen. xvii. 7.

declared as much as this to him, when he told him, that in *Isaac* should his Seed be called (d). That is, as the *Apostle* himself immediately goes on to explain it, *They which are the Children of the Flesh, these are not the Children of God: But the Children of the Promise are counted for the Seed. For this is the Word of Promise* (of which *Isaac*, as we read, was a Child), *At this Time will I come, and Sarah shall have a Son.* They are only, says he, the true Seed, who are here represented by *Isaac*; for *Ishmael* was *Abraham's* Son as well as he, and born and owned as such some Years before him; but being only the Son of his *Flesh*, he was therefore rejected, to make way, as the History shews, for the Son of his *Faith*; which therefore strongly typifies a *faithful Seed*, not such as should be born, as was *Ishmael*, after the *Flesh*, but, as *Isaac* was, by *Faith* in the *Word of Promise* \*. In short, we cannot have a better, or an easier Comment upon what the *Apostle* here says, than what we meet with from the same *Apostle* in his *Epistle* to the *Churches of Galatia*: *Tell me, ye that desire to be under the Law, do ye not bear the Law?*

(d) Gen. xxi. 12.

\* If it should be here inquired, why the *Apostle*, beginning with *Israel*, immediately makes a Transition back to *Abraham*; it may be proper to observe, that as no Limitation was made in the Seed of *Jacob*, the Distinction of *Seeds* was not to be learnt from thence, but from Instances going before.

For



For it is written, that Abraham had two Sons, the one by a Bond-maid, the other by a Free-woman. But he who was of the Bond-woman was born after the Flesh; but he of the Free-woman was by Promise. Which Things are † are an Allegory; for these are the two Covenants, the one from the Mount Sinai, which gendereth to Bondage, which is Agar (For this Agar is Mount Sinai in Arabia, and answereth to Jerusalem, which now is, and is in Bondage with her Children): But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the Mother of us all. For it is written, Rejoice, thou barren, that bearest not; break forth and cry, thou that travailest not: For the desolate have many more Children than she which hath an Husband. Now we, Brethren, as Isaac was, are the Children of Promise. But as then he that was born after the Flesh, persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now. Nevertheless what saith the Scripture? Cast out the Bond-woman, and her Son: For the Son of the Bond-woman shall not be Heir with the Son of the Free-woman. So then, Brethren, we are not Children of the Bond-woman, but of the Free (e).

† Note here, that St. Paul does not say, as some Interpreters would represent him, which Things will admit of an Allegory; but, as his Argument plainly requires, which Things are one, not, indeed, as denying the *Literal*, but asserting the *Typical* Sense of them.

(e) Gal. iv. 21. &c.

And

And not only this, says the *Apostle*; it does not only appear from the Declaration made to *Abraham*, that it was not the Children of the *Flesh*, but of the *Promise*, that should be counted his Seed, but when *Rebecca* also had conceived by one, even by our Father *Isaac*, we have a yet further Declaration of God's Mind in this Particular; for the Children being not yet born, neither having done any Good or Evil, that the Purpose of God according to Election might stand, not of Works, but of him that calleth, it was said unto her, *The Elder shall serve the Younger*. As it is accordingly testified to have happened by what is written, *Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated*.

It was easy for the *Jews* to object to the former Instance, that other Reasons might be assigned for God's Purpose of Election with regard to *Isaac*, than his hereby intending to typify, which is the Sense the *Apostle* had put on it, what KIND OF PERSONS should be deem'd his Seed; as that *Ismael* was the Son of a *Bond-woman*, whereas *Isaac* was the Son of a *Free*; and further, that as this Declaration was not made till some Years after *Ismael* was born, the Cause of his Rejection might therefore arise from his Conduct. In order therefore to remove all Objections of this Kind, that might be made against his former Instance, and to confirm yet more and more his first Assertion, that *Isaac* typified the

the *Sons of Promise*, he proceeds to a *Second*, against which no such Objections could lie. For here the Children had not only one *Father*, but were likewise both of them from the self-same *Mother*, *Twin-Brothers*, born both at a *Birth*; and yet, *before they were born*, or had done either *Good or Evil*, that the *Purpose of God according to Election* might stand, not of *WORKS*, as we ought to observe, but of *HIM THAT CALLETH*, it was said unto her, *The Elder shall serve the Younger*. Here is therefore a clear Demonstration, that the *Purpose of God* regarding the Seed of *Abraham* is not only a *Purpose according to Election*, respecting some, and disrespecting others; but also, that it is not of *Works* (to which in this Case no Regard was had), or that proceeds according to the *Law of Works*, which expressly appoints the *First-born* shall receive his Inheritance, tho' he be by a *Mother* who is not beloved (*f*); but such as depends intirely upon the Grace of *him that calleth*, that calleth to inherit the Promises, whom he pleases; and has declared and typified by these Proceedings, that we are to be saved by *Grace, thro' Faith, and not of Works*; and that the *Sons of the Law*, notwithstanding their boasted Right of *Primogeniture*, shall yield the Birth-right to the *Sons of Faith*. The preferring the one to the other

(*f*) Deut. xxi. 15.

before



*before they were born*, is an evident Proof, that it did not proceed from their *Works* : But the choosing the *Younger* of these before the *Elder* seems plainly *typical* of something further, and that the true Blessing of *Abraham* was not to be by the *Law*, which seems to be typified by the *first-born Esau*, but to spring from the *Gospel of Grace* represented by *Jacob the Younger*. Nor is this a *new*, but the *old* and *primitive* Sense in which *Christian Writers* commonly understood them. The *Apostle*, says *Jerom*, disputes of these Things *mystically*. *Jacob* and *Esau*, says *Ambrose*, are *Types* of two Sorts of Persons, Believers and Unbelievers. And *Jacob*, says *Austin*, bears the *Figure* of the *Church*, as *Esau* of the *antient Synagogue* \*.

It is to be observed indeed, as to both these Declarations, that they are not only of a *Temporal Import*, but that the latter especially did not so much relate to the *Children* themselves in a *personal* Consideration (in which respect we do not find it *true*) as it did to their several *Posterities*. Nor does the *Apostle* here understand it any otherwise, as appears by his referring to the Words of *Malacki*, which were not spoken of the Persons of *Jacob* and *Esau*, who had been dead many Ages before, but, as is plain from the

\* Hieron. in Mal. i. 2, 3. Ambros. in Rom. ix. 8, 9.  
August. in Enar. Pf. lxxviii.

Passage itself, of the two Houses of *Israel* and *Edom* then subsisting. *I have loved you, saith the Lord, to Israel: Yet ye say; Wherein hast thou loved us? Was not Esau Jacob's Brother? saith the Lord: Yet I loved Jacob, and I hated Esau, and laid his Mountains, and his Heritage waste, for the Dragons of the Wilderness* (g): Whereas no such thing was done in the Days of *Esau*, nor till after the Prophecy of *Obadiab*; where the Reason is also set down, and the same Names of *Jacob* and *Esau* applied to their several Nations.

It must appear therefore from hence, that the *Apostle's* Meaning in citing these Passages, which are all so evidently of a *temporal Import*, is not to prove to us, that *Isaac* and *Jacob* were particularly elected by God to eternal Life, and *Ishmael* and *Esau* rejected from any Part in it; since the Scriptures alleged are by no means sufficient to prove this, even with regard to the *Persons themselves*, and much less with regard to their *Offspring*. For is it likely, in the *FIRST* Place, that it should be any Part of God's Intent in telling *Abraham*, that *in Isaac his Seed should be called*, to acquaint him, that *Ishmael*, for whom he had a great Regard, was a Person ordained to Destruction? Is there any thing that sounds like this in all his *History*? When his Mother, being with

(g) Mal. i. 2, 3. See also Numb. xx. 14. and Deut. xxiii. 7.

Child of him, fled from the Face of her Mistress, an Angel is sent to her to tell her, that God would *multiply her Seed exceedingly, so that it should not be numbered for Multitude*; and that she should call her Son, when born, by the Name of *Ishmael*, which signifies, GOD WILL HEAR, *because the Lord had heard her Affliction*(b). And when God promises *Abraham*, that he should have also a Son by *Sarah*; and he had prayed, *that Ishmael might live before him*; He answers him thus: *Sarah thy Wife shall bear thee a Son indeed, and thou shalt call his Name Isaac; and I will establish my Covenant with him for an everlasting Covenant, and with his Seed after him. And as for Ishmael, I have heard thee: Behold, I have blessed him, and will make him fruitful, and will multiply him exceedingly: Twelve Princes shall he beget, and I will make him a great Nation. But my Covenant will I establish with Isaac, whom Sarah shall bear unto thee* (i). That is, my Covenant relating to the *promised Land*, this shall only be established with *Isaac*: Tho', as for *Ishmael*, I have heard thee, and have blessed him, and will also make of him a great Nation. And again, when God orders him to send *Hagar* and *Ishmael* out of his House, for that in *Isaac* his Seed shall be called, he at the same time tells him, *And also of the Son of the Bond-woman will I make a*

(b) Gen. xvi. 10, 11.

(i) Gen. xvii. 19, &amp;c.

*Nation,*



*Nation, because he is thy Seed (k). And when his Mother and he are cast out, an Angel is likewise sent, saying, Hagar, fear not; for God hath heard the Voice of the Lad; Arise, lift him up; for I will make him a great Nation (l). Now, tho' it appears from hence, that he was not to inherit with Isaac; yet it does not follow, that he was therefore a Vessel of Wrath; nor is it likely, when God tells Abraham he had blessed him, that he only meant he would bless him in this World, but had determined his Destruction in the World to come; or that his Promise to multiply his Seed exceedingly, meant only to multiply an accursed Race.*

And as it is not likely, that this was God's Meaning in his Declarations to *Abraham* relating to *Isaac* and *Ishmael*; so neither is it likely, in the SECOND Place, that he meant any thing of this Kind in the Declaration he made to *Rebecca*, in relation to *Jacob* and *Esau*. All we read of it is, That *Isaac* intreated the Lord for his Wife, because she was barren: And the Lord was intreated of him, and *Rebecca* his Wife conceived. And the Children struggled together within her: And she said, If so, why am I thus? And she went to inquire of the Lord. And the Lord said unto her, Two Nations are in thy Womb, and two manner of People shall be separated

(k) Gen. xxi. 12, 13. (l) Gen. xxi. 17, 18.

from thy Bowels ; and the one People shall be stronger than the other People, and the Elder shall serve the Younger (m). This indeed is a plain Declaration, that the Seed of Jacob should have the *Pre-eminence* : But was it a fit Declaration to be made to a *pregnant Woman*, that her Elder Son was in very deed a *Reprobate*, and one that was doom'd from Eternity to the Fire of *Hell* ? Is there any such Declaration as this to be found in Scripture ? Could it answer any wise or good End ? Or could *Isaac* ever thus understand it, and yet love him so affectionately as he did, only for eating now-and-then of his *Venison* ? What so rational Interpretation can we therefore assign to these Things, as that which the *Apostle* here has laid before us ? Namely, to consider these Proceedings as *figurative* of something else ; and these *temporal* Dispensations with regard to these Persons in *this Life*, as intended to *typify* those of the *Life to come* ; or, as the *Apostle* himself has expressed it, to signify to us hereby the *Sons of Promise*, and that *God's Purpose according to Election was not of Works*, as the *Jews* erroneously presumed it must be, but of the *Grace* of God thro' *Faith* in him that calleth ; and consequently, that the *Doctrine of Faith*, which he at that time preached, was in Fact, and for Substance, the same with

(m) Gen. xxv. 21, 22, 23.

what God, tho' more darkly, had all along preached to their *Fathers*, who by these his Proceedings, as well as by several others, had long since *typified* these Things unto them. Nor shall we see any Reason to wonder at all at this, if we only consider, that almost all the *Old Law* was thus *typical*, or, as the *Apostle* expresses it, *a Shadow of Things to come* (n).

And indeed as these Scriptures relating to *Jacob* and *Esau*, were their Import more dark than it is, are so clearly meant not of their *Persons*, but of the two *Nations* of the *Israelites* and *Idumeans*, it must surely be very unreasonable to condemn a whole Nation as *Reprobates* for merely descending from *Esau*, when it does not appear, that *Esau* was one himself, in any such Sense as we are now opposing, but the Fruit of *Isaac's* Prayer as well as *Jacob*: Nor does the word *Hate*, in Scripture, always properly signify *Hate*, but is frequently put for a *lower Degree of Love*. And therefore *Beza*, tho' a zealous Predestinarian, yet does not scruple to own, that the true God was both known, and holily worshiped, among those of *Esau's* Race, if not by all, yet by those that God had blessed (o). Nor does *Calvin* deny, but that, *Jacob I have loved*, belongs to his *whole Posterity*; which the Prophet opposes unto that of

(n) Col. ii. 17. and Heb. x. 1. (o) Beza in Job i. 1.



*Eſau* (p); and therefore cannot be made by any Art whatever to mean their Election to eternal Life.

It is, however, ſufficiently manifeſt, that the *Apoſtle* cites them here for no ſuch Purpoſe, but, as muſt plainly appear from the Premises duly conſidered, for Purpoſes juſt the *Re-verſe*; namely, to prove that the *ſpiritual* *Iſrael* are really the *Heirs* of the *Promiſes*, and not the *Iſrael after the Fleſh*, as they imagined. For if the *natural* *Iſrael* were really the *Iſrael* intended, the *Word of God muſt fail*, if they are *rejected*. But if, on the contrary, as the *Apoſtle* here argues, they are not the *Children of the Fleſh*, but of the *Promise*, that are deemed the *true Seed*, ſuch as were typified by *Iſaac*, and yet further prefigured by *Jacob*, Types of Heirſhip by Faith, and by Grace; if this be the Caſe, the Objection is then fully answered, and the Word of God ſtands firm, tho' *Iſrael* fall; and eſpecially as they are now generally deſtitute of that *Faith* in him that *calls*, to which the Promiſes of God were made. For ye are all the *Children of God*, ſays the Apoſtle, by *Faith in Chriſt Jeſus*. And if ye be *Chriſt's* (by Faith), then are ye *Abraham's* (faithful) *Seed*, and (therefore) *Heirs according to the Promise* (q).

It may be proper perhaps to remark on this Head further, that the Hiſtory in *Genesis*

(p) Calv. Inſt. Lib. 3. cap. 21. § 7. (q) Gal. iii. 26, 29.  
affords

affords us a very good Reason, why these Limitations as to *Abraham's Seed* were made; and that is, that his *Seed* in the *Whole* was too much for the *Land* to contain, since *Ishmael* himself made a Nation, and *Isaac* was Father of two; *three Nations* descending from only these *two Sons* (to say nothing of those that were afterwards born by *Keturah*); which was surely a Reason for excluding *two* of them, tho' not for concluding from thence, that there was not a *Meaning* in choosing one of these before another, as the *Apostle* has not only shewn there was, but made subservient to the *Christian Cause*.

But having thus traced out the Sense of the *Apostle* hitherto, we come now to another *Objection*, which is evidently drawn from the Premises just consider'd: *What shall we say then?* says he: *Is there Unrighteousness with God? God forbid:* He seems plainly aware, that the *Jews* would charge this with *Unrighteousness*; and that the Answer he had given to their *Objection* against God's *Truth*, would occasion another afresh against his *Justice*. Here perhaps it may be inquired, whence such an *Objection* as this should arise; or from what Part of the *Apostle's Discourse* such an *Inference* as this should be drawn. Was it from choosing *Isaac*, and refusing *Ishmael*? from loving *Jacob*, and rejecting *Esau*? But can it be  
imagined

imagined any-way likely, that an Objection on this Head should come from the Mouth of a *Jew*? They would hardly be guilty of thus contradicting the *Law*, or finding fault with what they esteemed their *Glory*, and plac'd but too much *Confidence* upon. What the *Apostle* had quoted was all to be found in *their Scriptures*: They knew, and acknowledged the *Truth* of it; nor is it once to be thought they would charge it with any *Injustice*; nor could they, indeed, without hurting themselves, and their Cause. God's loving of *Jacob* was reckon'd a Proof in their *Favour*; and as they were no-way *displeas'd* with the Preference shewn to themselves, so neither were they so zealous for the *Edomites*; their profess'd and inveterate Enemies, as to go about to charge God with *Injustice* for rejecting or slighting of them. In short, the *Facts* here appeal'd to were *acknowledged* as much by the *Jews*, as they were by the *Apostle* himself; and in the *literal* Sense of them made too much for them, to suppose they would make them a Matter of any Objection. And therefore it could not be *these*; but the *Apostle's Sense* of them, that the Objection strikes at in the Words before us. And this indeed was so very adverse to the general Taste of the *Jews*, that it could not be expected they would pass it quietly. His *Explication* of these Matters, and the *Sense* he had



had put on these Passages, was such as, if suffer'd to pass without an Answer, must condemn them at once of persisting in no small Error. The *Promises* made to their *Fathers*, according to this Explanation, could now be no longer of use to them. It was to no manner of Purpose to plead their descending from *Abraham*, since their being *Children* of the *Flesh* would not prove they were so of the *Promise*. Nor could their *Adherence to the Law* be any better a Plea than the former, if God had really declared, even before the Law was given, that his *Purpose of Election* should stand, not of Works, but of him that calleth; or that it should not be regulated by the *Law of Works*, but, as these Instances shew, by *Faith in the Word of Promise*. But this, say they, cannot be true; nor is it any way consistent with the Rules of *Equity*. We do not pretend, that all who spring from *Israel* should therefore be justified merely on that Account; for we are not ignorant, that with many of them God declared himself highly displeased; yea, and *swore in his Wrath, that they should not enter into his Rest*. But that he should ever reject such as cleave and adhere to the *Law*, is a Point we can never agree to; or that his *Purpose of Choice, or Election*, as you would persuade us, should be, as you have stiled it, *not of Works*. For must it not argue *Unrighteousness*, which is

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far

far from the Nature of God, thus to reject the *Observers* of his own *just Law*, and to transfer his *Choice* to those who have no such *Claim*? The just Judge of the Earth cannot so far run counter to *Right*, as to form any *such Purposes* as you ascribe to him.

This seems plainly the *Rise*, and as plainly the *Sense*, of the Objection we here find obviated; and to which the *Apostle* as readily prepares to answer, as he did to that he had been just dispatching. *What shall we say then*, says he, if Things be as I have just represented them? Is it unworthy of God to proceed by the Rules I have mentioned? Will it follow from hence, that he is therefore *unjust* or *unrighteous*? Or is there any thing in these his Proceedings, upon which any such Charge as this can be fairly grounded? The *Jews*, I know, will be ready to think there is; and that it cannot be just in God to reject those who follow the Law, and to justify those who do not. But *God forbid*, or, as the Words should be rendered both here, and in all other Places, *Let it not be*, that we should any of us think, that God does any thing *unjust* or *unrighteous*; or that I should be guilty of preaching a Faith, from which any such Inference can be justly drawn. That the *Law* was given by God, I freely own; but not for the *Purposes* which you suppose, or to *annul* the *Promises* made before.

before. I have already shewn you, that *Abraham* was justified while yet in his *Uncircumcision*; and that *the Promise, that he should be Heir of the World, was not to him, or his Seed, through the Law, but through the Righteousness which is of Faith* (r); which is also further confirmed by the Examples of *Isaac* and *Jacob*. And to shew you yet further, that God has really an absolute Right to shew Mercy to *whom*, or to *what Kind of Persons*, he pleases; and that without being *unrighteous*, as you seem to imagine he must be, if he should ever depart from the *Rules of the Law of Works*; only be pleased to consider what *he says to Moses*, that very Person by whom the *Law* was given: *I will have Mercy* says he, *on whom I will have Mercy, and I will have Compassion on whom I will have Compassion*: Or, as it is somewhat differently worded, tho' of the same Sense and Import, in *Exodus*, *I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will shew Mercy on whom I will shew Mercy* (s).

Now, besides that *these Words* in themselves are a Claim of an *absolute Power* of being *gracious* and *merciful* as himself sees proper; and which, as appears from the *Context*, is reckoned as Part of his *Glory*; if it be further considered *when* this Declaration was made, it will be a still stronger Proof of the

(r) Rom. iv. 10.—13.

(s) Exod. xxxiii. 19.



Point before us: And that was, when your *Fathers* had grievously *sinned* against God, and been guilty of *Idolatry* in the Affair of the *Golden Calf*; for which, according to the *Law*, they all of them stood *condemned* to no less than an *utter Destruction* (t). Such a Declaration therefore as this, at such a Junctionure, is an evident Proof, that Salvation is not by the *Law*; and that God has full as much *Right* to shew *Grace* to idolatrous *Gentiles*, as he had heretofore to idolatrous *Jews*. And what is the Inference from hence, but this? Namely, that *Acceptance with God*, which is the Point we are at present upon, *is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth Mercy*; or which is much the same, tho' expressed in other Words, that *God's Purpose of Election*, as to whom he will choose for his People, is *not of Works*, but proceeds from the *Grace and Mercy of him that calls*, that calls and justifies on what Terms *he pleases*, and has declared his sovereign Power so to do. And is it any way fit, that Men should arraign this Power? Shall Sinners charge God with Injustice for shewing them Mercy? Or is he unrighteous for abolishing a Law that cannot justify, and for bringing in one that can? A Law of Faith and Grace, by which Men may be justified, when it is impossible, as

(t) Exod. xxii. 20. and Deut. xiii. throughout.

Things now stand, they should ever be so by the other. Consider it only as an *Act of Grace*, contrived on Purpose for the shewing *Mercy*, and cease for Shame to call that Grace *Injustice*. You may *will* to approve yourselves what Way you please, and *run* in that Way with great Labour and Zeal for that Purpose ; but as you are plainly under a Law which *cannot* justify, and as it must come at last from *God that sheweth Mercy*, it must therefore be *his*, not *yours*, to state the *Terms* of it ; which, as your *own Scriptures* shew, he has claimed as his absolute Right ; and I need not acquaint you, that he is one, who will not act *unjustly*, or claim a Power, which is not his proper *Due* \*.

It has been remarked on the Words, *him that willetb*, and *him that runneth*, that they allude to *Abraham's Prayer* to God for *Ishmael* ; as also to *Isaac's willing*, that *Esau* should have the Blessing ; and to *Esau's running* for Venison, at his Father's Command, for that End : Nor is it unlikely, indeed, but that the *Apostle*, in using these Phrases, might have these very Facts in his Eye. And yet, as this Inference is here plainly drawn from

\* *Note*, That as this is an Argument which seems intirely to affect the *Jews*, it may serve as a yet further Proof, that it is only with them the *Apostle* is here disputing : And indeed the Whole of his Proofs, being drawn from the *Law* and the *Prophets*, seem plainly adapted to such as acknowledged no other Authority.

the preceding Declaration to *Moses*, how much soever these Actions might lead to the Use of these Phrases, his principal Meaning seems here, as it hitherto has been, to oppose the Law of *Works* to that of *Grace*, and the *Willing* and *Running* prescribed by the Rules of the *former*, to the trusting by *Faith* in the *Promises* made by the *latter*; which, as they all proceed from *him that sheweth Mercy*, his Speech to *Moses* therefore shews are *just*.

It may be proper further to observe, that as the *Apostle* does not bring this Declaration for any such End, as to prove *such a Power* in God, as pays *no regard* to the Laws of *Just* and *Righteous*, but, as appears from the Context, for Purposes just the *Reverse*, a just, a glorious, and a gracious Power of *shewing Mercy*, as himself *sees proper*, to such as otherwise could lay no Claim to it; so, that his Inference from it is, not that *human Endeavours*, when rightly and properly managed, are such as will nothing avail to our *Justification*, since he exhorts the *Corinthians* so to *run*, that they may *obtain* (u); but that our *Justification*, as *Sinners*, is not by the *Works of the Law*, and must therefore be sought for on the *Terms of Mercy*. And to strain his Words to any further Meaning, is not only to strain them quite beyond his Purpose, but converting wholesome Food to dangerous Poison, and wresting the

(u) 1 Cor. ix. 24. See also 2 Tim. iv. 7. and Heb. xii. 1. Scriptures,



Scriptures, if not to our own *Destruction*, yet, as many have found, to their own very great *Distress*, and so as to lay a Foundation for grievous and dreadful *Temptations*.

Having thus established God's Right to *shew Mercy* as he himself pleases, he proceeds, in his Answer, to shew his equal Right to *reject* and *punish* also as he pleases ; which he proves and illustrates from what the Scripture says to *Pharaoh*, or from another Declaration made to the Prophet *Moses*, which he was ordered to deliver to the aforesaid King, the Purport of which is contained in these Words following : *Even for this same Purpose have I raised thee up, that I might shew my Power in thee, and that my Name might be declared throughout all the Earth.* God is not *unrighteous*, says he, in *shewing Mercy* ; for this appears from what he said to *Moses* : Nor in *rejecting* such as slight and abuse his Mercy ; for this appears from the Message sent to *Pharaoh* ; in which Message there are these Things considerable ; the *Person* to whom it was sent, the *Time* when, and the *Message* itself. And, *First*, The *Person* it was sent to was *Pharaoh*, the then King of *Egypt*, a notable Example of *stubborn Unbelief*, and therefore the fitter for the *Apostle's* Purpose ; who hardened his Heart against many remarkable *Plagues*, and refused his Obedience to many and many a Message, tho' backed with Miracles  
done

done before his Eyes. As for the *Time* when this Message was sent to him, it was after the Plague of the Boils, and when that of the terrible Hail was just at hand ; that is, when no less than *Six* Plagues had already been tried in vain, and the *Seventh* was now at the Door. As for the *Message* itself, it consists of these *two* Parts ; a Declaration of something God had done, to wit, that he had *raised him up* ; and also a further Declaration of the End and Reason why, namely, *that he might shew his Power in him, and that his Name might be declared throughout all the Earth*. The true Meaning of which will most likely be best understood by considering the Place at large, in which it stands.

*And the Lord said unto Moses (w), Rise up early in the Morning, and stand before Pharaoh, and say unto him, Thus saith the Lord God of the Hebrews, Let my People go, that they may serve me. For I will at this Time, that is, unless thou compliest, or if thou refuse, as it is mentioned expressly in the next succeeding Message (x), I will send all my Plagues upon thine Heart, and upon thy Servants, and upon thy People ; that thou mayest know, that there is none like me in all the Earth. For now I will stretch out my Hand, that I may smite thee and thy People with Pestilence ; and thou shalt be cut off from the Earth ; or, as it should*

(w). Exod. ix. 13.—19.

(x) Exod. x. 4.

rather

rather be rendered more consistent. with Truth, and the Context (y), *For now I had stretched out my Hand, and smote thee and thy People with Pestilence; and thou hadst been cut off from the Earth. But, in very Deed, for this Cause have I raised thee up; or, as it is in the Margin, more agreeable to the Hebrew, made thee stand (z); that is, preserved and delivered thee hitherto, and not cut thee off, as I justly and easily could do; for to shew in thee my Power, in a much more signal Manner, and so as that my Name may be declared thereby throughout all the Earth. As yet exaltest thou thyself against my People, that thou wilt not let them go? Behold, To-morrow about this time I will cause it to rain a very grievous Hail, such as hath not been in Egypt, since the Foundation thereof, even until now. Send therefore now and gather thy Cattle, and all that thou hast in the Field: For upon every Man and Beast, which shall be found in the Field, and shall not be brought home, the Hail shall come down upon him, and they shall die.* From which we see, that in this Declaration here is not only Mercy mixed with Judgment; but that God's raising him up to make his Power known in him, is not, that Pharaoh was created for any such End and Purpose, or that he could not have avoided his Destruction by a timely Belief and Repentance; but

(y) See Whitby's Annot. on Rom. ix. 17. (z) See Exod. ix. 11. where the same Word is applied to the Magicians.



only that God had *raised him up*, and delivered him from former Judgments, not, as *Pharaoh* might imagine, for want of Power to do any more to him, but to *reserve* him, if he continued still obstinate, for a much more remarkable Vengeance than that of *Boils*, and such as should *declare his Name and Power through all the Earth*. And in this Sense is it rendered both in the *Septuagint* and *Chaldee Paraphrase*, the *Latin Translation* of *Junius*, with several others, and the *marginal Note* in our own.

But let us now proceed to the general *Inference* which the *Apostle* draws from the Instances just now given: *Therefore hath he Mercy*, says he, *on whom he will have Mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth*: The first Part of this, or that God has a Right to have *Mercy* on whom he will, appears from the Declaration made to *Moses*: But the latter Part of the Conclusion, or that God *hardeneth* whom he will, takes its Rise from the Instance of *Pharaoh*. It will be inquired, perhaps, why he should mention *Hardenings* here, which he had not done in any thing foregoing. But we shall have no Reason to wonder at this, if we but consider how often it is mentioned in *Pharaoh's* History, the Concern it had in the Destruction threatened, and in the final Execution of it both on him, and on all his Host. In short, the *Hardenings* of *Pharaoh* was not only a Thing well known,

*known*, but which the *Jews* had always looked upon as *righteous*, and therefore the fitter for the *Apostle* to exhibit on this Occasion, as a proper *Glass* in which to view *themselves*, whose Case and *Pharaoh's* were but too much alike; they having as obstinately stood it against the Miracles wrought by *Christ*, as *Pharaoh* had against those in the Days of *Moses*. And thus, as it appears from the *former* of these Declarations, that God is not unrighteous in *shewing Mercy* to whom he pleases, tho' on other Conditions than such as the *Law* has appointed; and therefore could not be so, in the *Mercy* then shewn to the *Gentiles*; so does it appear from the *latter*, that he is no more *unrighteous* in *hardening* whom he pleases; and, in a more particular manner, that this is a Proof of his Pleasure to harden stubborn and obstinate *Unbelievers*, and to reserve them also for such *signal Vengeance*, upon their still continuing to reject his *Calls* to them, as may make his Name be *known through all the Earth*; in which latter Case also, as well as in that before-mentioned, the Case of the *Jews* and *Pharaoh* was very similar.

But this affords an Occasion for another and *Third* Objection: *Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth he yet find Fault? For who hath resisted his Will?* As the *Apostle* had covertly insinuated in producing the Instance of *Pharaoh*, that the *Jews* either in Fact then were,

or were however in no little Danger of being, *hardened* to signal Destruction, it is not much to be wondered at, if, stung with so home a Reflection, some ignorant Zealot or other should thus object to him: If this be the Case, that God *hardens* whom he will, why then does he yet *find Fault*? Since it is not in the Power of Men to *oppose* his Pleasure, or to be other than *hardened*, if he is determined they shall be so. With what Propriety are they then *complained* of, for acting a Part which they have not the Power to avoid, urged on by the Force of his own *irresistible Will*? The Objection seems to carry, in the Face of it, an Air of *Ignorance*, mixt with no small *Insolence*. It does not *deny*, that God *hardens*; but *blames him*, where that is the Case, for *finding Fault*, at the same time that it owns, that he *does so*: And is therefore no better than taxing an *Action of God* with *Unfitness*, and asking the Reason with *Impudence*, why he does it. And in this very Light it seems plain the *Apostle* here takes it, from the sharp *Reproof*, with which he begins his Answer: *Nay but, O Man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the Thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus?*

There is, perhaps, no Part of Scripture that has been more *abused* than this has. It has been made use of as an Argument in various Cases, yea, as a silencing Argument, for Opinions



nions quite void of Foundation ; and repeated with as groundless an Assurance, as the Objection it here stands to reprove. A modest Arguing against *Doctrines of Men* has been frequently stiled by this Name: And Arguments which would not admit of other Answer, have been thought sufficiently answered by only repeating this Passage, and confidently thundering out with Zeal and Vehemence, *Who art thou that repliest against God?* When yet there can be nothing more obvious to a Person of any Attention, than that this is an Argument, which, in all *doubtful Cases*, will serve one Side as well as the other, and may, with equal Propriety, be used by both, or should rather more properly be by both avoided ; since a considerate Person must needs see a great deal of Difference between a Person's Arguing, as he thinks, *for God*, and what the *Apostle* here stiles a *Replying against him*. And yet there certainly is such a thing as the *Apostle* here calls by this Name ; nor does he call it improperly in the Case before us, tho' others frequently have done so since. For the Objector here allows *God does the Thing*, at the same time that he goes on to *censure* and *blame him* for it, and to ask the Reason of his doing it in so very *unbecoming* a Manner, as must appear to deserve the Reproof the *Apostle* gives him. Indeed the Reason of the Objection is a very weak one, and far from being strong enough  
to

to bear the Weight, the Objector here is pleased to lay upon it : *Why does he yet find Fault ?* is too bold and too captious a Question to be defended by the Reason here given, *for who has resisted his Will ?* which contains no more than an ignorant *daring* Assertion, and which, as here applied, is manifestly *false*.

But this will lead us to consider the Case of *Hardening*, as it is on this the Objection is built. And here, as to the *Subjects* of the *Hardening* complained of, I shall choose to express myself, for certain Reasons, in the Language of the *Synod of Dort*. The Talent of Grace, says the Synod, which is once granted by God, is taken away from no Man, unless he has buried it first through his own Default (a). Hence it is that in the Scriptures we are from Place to Place admonished, that we resist not the Spirit, that we quench not the Spirit, that we receive not the Grace of God in vain, that we fall not away from God (b). Yea, this Reason of the divine Dereliction is plainly assigned, that God first is forsaken by Men : *Because I have called, and ye refused, I also will laugh in your Destruction* (c). *Ye have forsaken the Lord, that he should forsake you* (d). But it is nowhere in the Scriptures so much as once insinuated, that God is either wont, or willing, to take from any Man the Aid of exciting

(a) Matt. xxv. 28.  
(d) 2 Chron. xxiv. 20.

(b) Heb. iii. 7.

(c) Prov. i. 24.

Grace,

Grace, or any other Help which he has once given, in order to his Conversion, unless the Man's own previous Fault shall first make way for it. Thus taught, say they, the *orthodox Fathers*, who disputed against the *Pelagians* (e).

This therefore settled in the *first* Place ; that God hardens none but such as first deserve it, and that by an obstinate and wilful Abuse of his Grace and Goodness ; the Objection is already despoiled of great Part of its Strength ; but must yet be much more so, if we consider the *Manner* of Hardening, which is not by infusing a Principle of Hardness, or making any such Alteration in Mens Make or Frame, as renders their future Hardening unavoidable ; but, as the Scripture abundantly testifies, by much *Long-suffering*, as too indulgent Parents spoil their Children by a Treatment, which, tho' intended for no such Purpose, is yet frequently seen to be productive of such an Event. It must be owned, indeed, with regard to the Case of *Pharaoh*, that the Magicians of *Egypt* may be supposed to have contributed something, by their performing some of the same Things with *Moses*. But, whatever Influence these Proceedings may be thought at the *first* to have had on him, their failing at the End of *three* Trials, and their own open Confession, that the *Finger of God* was against them, must

(e) AÆ. Syn. Dor. Par. 2. p. 129.



be sufficient, one would think, to have wiped out all former Impressions, and to have shewn him, as it certainly did, if he would but have set his Heart to it, that he was really opposing a superior Power. To which may be added, that his *Magicians*, however able to *imitate* some of the former Judgments, could yet *remove* none of them from him; inso-much that in the Plague of the *Frogs*, which their Inchantments were able to *imitate*, he was yet obliged to call for *Moses* and *Aaron*, and to promise them, that if they would intreat the Lord to do this for him, he thereupon would *let the People go* (f). Nor is there other Reason assigned for his Refusal afterwards, but that *he saw there was Respite*, and therefore *he hardened his Heart* (g); either as thinking perhaps, that the God of the *Hebrews* had already done all that he could do, or that he could again at any time impose on him by some specious Promises, as he might possibly think he had then, and as he seems to exemplify in his future Conduct, pretending Compliance, till he could get the Plague removed from him, and then returning to his former Purpose, as *Moses* charges him expressly, with regard to the Plague of the Flies: *I will intreat*, says he, *for thee,—but let not Pharaoh deal deceitfully any more* (h). And accordingly we find him afterwards owning more than once, that *he had been*

(f) Exod. viii. 8. (g) Vers. 15. (h) Vers. 29.

guilty of Sin in this Matter, that the Lord was righteous, and that he and his People were wicked (i). And we find notwithstanding, that when he found the Plagues were ceased, his Acknowledgements always ceased with them ; and that he as constantly hardened his Heart, as the Judgments of God were stayed, or taken from him. All which, duly considered, seems plainly to make it appear, that the Cause of his Hardening was nothing but God's *Forbearance*, with the perverse Construction he continually seems to have made of it, which drew him on at last to utter Ruin ; as St. Paul also charges the Jews in the Beginning of this his *Epistle* (k): *Despiseſt thou, ſays he, the Riches of his Goodneſs, and Forbearance, and Long ſuffering, not knowing that the Goodneſs of God leadeth thee to Repentance ? But after thy Hardneſs, and impenitent Heart, treaſureſt up unto thyſelf Wrath againſt the Day of Wrath ?* And to the ſame Purpoſe, was it long ago obſerved by the Wiſe King Solomon, *That becauſe Sentence againſt an evil Work is not executed ſpeedily, therefore the Heart of the Sons of Men is fully ſet in them to do Evil* (l). And if Men are only therefore hardened by ſuch a perverting as this of God's *Goodneſs*, which ought to have different Effects on them, he has ſurely a Right to complain, that no better Uſe is made of it.

(i) Exod. ix. 27. and x. 16. (k) Chap. ii. 4, 5. (l) Eccleſ. viii. 11.

And yet this is not all that may be said in this Case, to shew *that God is righteous when he judges* : There is this further Consideration to be added still, that it does not appear, but that even when *Men are hardened*, there is yet a *Capacity* left them of *recovering* from it. It seems to be evident in the Case of *Pharaoh*, that it was in his Power to have prevented his Destruction, even after the threatening Message here referred to ; which was not more absolute than the Judgment denounced against *Nineveh*, and which we ought to interpret according to God's own Rule, as delivered to us by the Prophet *Jeremy* : *At what Instant I shall speak concerning a Nation, and concerning a Kingdom, to pluck up, and to pull down, and to destroy it ; if that Nation, against whom I have pronounced, turn from their Evil, I will repent of the Evil that I thought to do unto them (m)*. Nor was this Condition omitted in the Case before us, but, on the contrary, mentioned expressly, as we have already observed, in the next succeeding Message : *And Moses and Aaron came in unto Pharaoh, and said unto him, Thus saith the Lord God of the Hebrews, How long wilt thou refuse to humble thyself before me ? Let my People go, that they may serve me. Else, if thou refuse to let my People go, behold, Tomorrow will I bring the Locusts into thy Coast (n)*. And will any one say, that *Pha-*

(m) Jer. xviii. 7, 8.

(n) Exod. x. 3, 4.



*raoh* had not a *Power* to do this? The very Speech here made to him shews the contrary ; nor was he very far from willing to do it then, as it plainly appears from the following Part of the History. 'Tis true, God tells *Moses* before, *he had hardened his Heart* ; but then we need not go far to discover the Means of his doing it ; and that it was only by stopping the *Thunder*, the *Rain*, and the *Hail* ; which when *Pharaoh* saw, we are told, that *he sinned yet more, and hardened his Heart, both he, and his Servants* (o). And yet the Means here made use of, seem as proper to lead to Repentance, as the Appearance of *Christ* to *St. Paul* in his Way to *Damascus*. Nor are we therefore to judge them to be insufficient, because they did not then answer that End ; since they ought to be judged of from their *just* and their *natural* Tendency, and not from the *Event* or *Abuse* of them. God indeed thought it proper in this Case, that *Moses* should know the *Event* from the very Beginning, or that *Pharaoh* would really be *hardened* on this Occasion, as he would otherwise most probably have been discouraged from going on, by finding the *Event* so cross to his Expectation : But this is far from a Proof, that his Hardening was so *irresistible*, as that it was not in his *Power* to have acted otherwise, and to have *let the People go*, as God required, and as we find

(o) Exod. ix. 33, 34.

that he afterwards did, when his Hand was yet *stronger* upon him.

And as it thus appears, that the Hardening of *Pharaoh* was such as he might have *recovered* from, had he *set his Heart* to it, as he ought, and should have done ; so does it likewise appear from several other Places, that where Men have been *hardened* by an obstinate Course of Rebellion, their Case, notwithstanding, has not been so *desperate*, as to be *past all Hopes* of finding a happy Change. We have a Proof of this in the *Twelfth Chapter* of the Prophecy of *Ezekiel* : *The Word of the Lord*, says the Prophet, *came unto me, saying, Son of Man, thou dwellest in the midst of a rebellious House, which have Eyes to see, and see not ; they have Ears to hear, and hear not : For they are a rebellious House. Therefore thou, Son of Man, prepare thee Stuff for removing, and remove by Day in their Sight :—It may be they will consider, though they be a rebellious House. Which not only shews, that such an Effect was possible ; but also the Propriety of the Means made use of to bring it about. We are likewise elsewhere acquainted with regard to the People of Israel, that all the Chief of the Priests, and the People, transgressed very much, after all the Abominations of the Heathen, and polluted the House of the Lord, which he had hallowed in Jerusalem. And the Lord God of their Fathers sent to them by his Messengers,*  
*rising*

*rising up betimes, and sending ; because he had Compassion on his People, and on his Dwelling-place : But they mocked the Messengers of God, and despised his Words, and misused his Prophets, until the Wrath of the Lord arose against his People, till there was no Remedy*(p).

Is it not evident from hence, both that the People had *greatly sinned*, and that they also were *greatly hardened*, so as to *mock and despise* the Means of Grace made use of ? And is it not as evident notwithstanding, that they had *Power* to have made a *good Use* of them, from their being sent to them out of *Compassion*, which could otherwise not be the Case ? Nor could St. Paul imply less, when he taxes the *Jews*, as we have seen already, with *despising through Hardness of Heart that very Goodness*, which, he at the same time tells them, *led them to Repentance*. And, to add no more upon this Head, what less can he mean, when he calls to those, who are not only *asleep*, but *dead in Sin*, to *awake and arise, and Christ shall give them Light* (q) ? The Sleep therefore is not so sound, but that there is still a Possibility of awaking from it ; nor the Death here meant of such a deadly Nature, as not to admit of a Return to Life.

And if this be the Case, as both Reason and Scripture loudly proclaim it is, that God hardens none but *obstinate, stubborn Sinners* ; that they are only hardened by *Forbearance*

(p) 2 Chron. xxxvi. 14, 15, 16. (q) Ephes. v. 14.

and



*and Long-suffering* ; and that their Hardening is not only *preventable* at first, but *removeable* afterwards by serious Consideration ; if Men are seldom, or never, *so hardened*, but that there is still a *Possibility* of *softening* left to them ; and of changing their *Hearts of Stone* for *Hearts of Flesh* ; where is the Strength of the Objection, *Why does he yet find Fault ?* And how justly does it appear to deserve the Reproof here given, *Nay but, O Man, who art thou that repliest against God ?* Is it fit, canst thou think, that thou shouldst thus take upon thee to *censure* his righteous Proceedings ? He has surely a Right to *find Fault* with hardened Sinners, who have Eyes, but *will not* see ; and Ears, but *will not* hear. And if thou, through thy Ignorance, dost not see this Right, or art not so well acquainted as thou shouldst be with the Case of *Hardening* ; yet as thou knowest, that God *does find Fault* on such Occasions, thou certainly oughtest to presume, that he does it *justly*. Can Reproof, or finding Fault, be ever *juster*, than when Men have *wilfully* brought themselves in Danger, and continue *wilfully* to shut their Eyes against the Means of their Deliverance from it ? They are not *hardened*, as thou supposest, by any such *irresistible Will*, as that they may not be *justly found Fault with*. And if thou knowest not this, thou shouldst rather have acknowledged thy Ignorance, than vented thy Spleen in a  
groundless

groundless Complaint against one, who thou oughtest to believe *will do nothing but what is right*, whether thou art able to discern it, or no. This is surely thy Duty, and what, as a Man, must better become thee, than thus to revile the Justice of the God of Heaven. *Shall Man be more just than God? Shall a Man be more pure than his Maker (r)?* Consider it therefore, O Man, *who thou art that repliest against God*, and of what intolerable *Presumption* thou art herein guilty. Would it be proper, when a *Workman* has finished a Piece of *Work*, that his *Workmanship*, supposing such a thing possible, should go about to dispute with him on account of the *Form* he had made it in? As improper is it in thee to go about to *complain* against him, in whom *thou livest and movest*, and *hast thy Being*, and that, as thou oughtest to believe, on as *wise and gracious Terms*, as his infinite *Wisdom and Grace* has seen expedient. Let this therefore convince thee, that thou art guilty concerning this Matter; and that thou hast acted as unfit, and as unbecoming, a Part, in thus objecting against God, with a *Why does he yet find Fault?* as it would be for the Thing formed to address to him that formed it, with a *Why hast thou made me thus? Wo to him*, as the Scripture has taught us, *that strives with his Maker! Let the Potsherd strive with Potsherd of the Earth: Shall the Clay say to him that fashions it, What makest thou? or thy*

(r) Job iv. 17.

*Work, He hath no Hands (s) ?* Such a Proceeding is certainly utterly *indefensible*, and such as must be very *unbecoming* in any *Man*, but especially in a *Man of Judea*, where God has been so long *known*, and which has been so long the Object of his *Grace and Favour*. Shall *they* set themselves to *reply against God*, or think themselves *hardly* done by ? Let it never be published in *Gath*, nor told in *Ashkelon*, that a *Jew* should be guilty of talking in any such manner.

It may here be observed, that there is nothing in this *Reproof*, that implies it to be any way *unfit* or *unlawful*, as some would persuade us, to inquire into the *Ways of God* with due *Sobriety*, and with such *Humility* and *Reverence*, as our State and Condition as *Creatures*, and the Relations between us, require. For in this manner do we find *Abraham* discoursing, propounding Questions, and receiving Answers, with regard to God's *Righteousness* in destroying *Sodom (t)*. The Prophet *Jeremy* also desires Leave to plead with him, as to the present Prosperity of wicked Men : *Righteous*, says he, *art thou, O Lord, when I plead with thee ; yet let me talk with thee of thy Judgments : Wherefore doth the Way of the Wicked prosper ? Wherefore are all they happy, that deal very treacherously (u) ?* David also declares, with regard to the *Works of the Lord*, that they are

(s) *Isai. xlv. 9.* (t) *Gen. xviii. 23, &c.* (u) *Jer. xii. 1.*

*great,*



great, and sought out of all them that have Pleasure therein (w). And again, I will praise thee, says he, with Uprightness of Heart, when I shall have learned thy righteous Judgments (x). Nor is it easy indeed to perceive how we should be able to praise God, as required, with Understanding, if it is not allowed us to use our Understandings, and to exercise them as well as we can upon the Things that belong to our Peace, and upon which the Honour of God and Religion so highly depends. In short, it is not only lawful, but our Duty, to study the Scriptures, and to have as just Thoughts of our Maker as may be. And therefore no Inquiries of this Nature can be either prohibited here, or in any other Part of the Book, which commands us to search it (y), and which recommends itself to us by this very Motive, that it is able to make us wise unto Salvation (z). Against Searches of this Kind the Apostle's Reproof has no Force: but only against a presumptuous Arraigning the Wisdom or Justice of God in such Proceedings as are at the same time owned to be really his, or where it cannot be reasonably doubted whether they are his Proceedings or no. In such Cases as these, the Reproof is undoubtedly just; and, even without the Authority of St. Paul to back us, we might justly reply with respect to Objec-

(w) Pf. cxi. 2. (x) Pf. cxix. 7. (y) John v. 39.  
(z) 2 Tim. iii. 15.

tions of this Sort, *Nay but, O Man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the Thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus?*

But having thus largely consider'd the Justice of the *Apostle's* Reproof; let us now proceed to consider his further Answer: *Hath not the Potter*, says he, *Power over the Clay, of the same Lump to make one Vessel to Honour, and another to Dishonour?* The Asserters of the Doctrine of an *absolute Predestination* have always looked upon this as a shining Proof for it; and as they take it for certain, that the *Apostle* is here on that Subject, it is but taking the Liberty to substitute *God* for the *Potter*, the *Earth* for the *Clay*, and *Mankind* for the *Vessels* here mentioned of *Honour* and *Dishonour*, and the Sense, without more ado, will rise as follows: *Hath not God a Power over the Earth*, out of which he made *Mankind*, so as that out of the same Lump of it he may lawfully make *some* for everlasting Life and Glory, and *others* again, on the other hand, for Shame, and eternal Destruction? But, notwithstanding their Confidence, that this is the genuine Sense of these Words, there are not wanting, on the other Side, as great, and as learned *Interpreters*, who are every way as confident, that this is not the Sense of them; and that they were never intended for any such Purpose. And it is certainly a

Rule

*Rule* to be observ'd in all Cases of this Kind, not so much to regard what Sense the Words *will bear*, as what is the Sense they were intended *to bear*; not what pretty Conclusion the Wit of Man *may draw* from them, but what is really the *End* and *Design* of them in the Place under Consideration: Which in this, as in most other Cases, must be drawn from consulting the *Context*, or the Reason and Nature of Things. Let us examine them therefore by this *Rule*, and let us see what the Issue and Event will be. We find them then brought in by way of Answer to the Objection, *Why does he yet find Fault?* Which, tho' built, as we have seen, upon *false* and *erroneous* Principles, yet, as it takes upon it to censure what it at the same time allows is God's doing, the *Apostle* therefore answers, in the first place, with the *Reproof* we have just been considering; to which he adds, as a further *Reply*, the Words before us. He had made use of one Comparison already, in order to shew the Impropriety of *replying against God* in this manner; and he now further confirms it by a Second, which is taken from the unquestionable Power which a *Potter* has over his *Clay*, so as to make of it either Vessels of *Honour*, or of *Dis honour*, as he himself pleases, without being any way guilty of Injustice in it. *Has not the Potter*, says the *Apostle*, *this Power?* Sure he has. It was never disputed: Nor



was he ever objected to, or complain'd of, for it.

Well, but what is the *Inference*, you will be ready to ask, from this, if it be not, that *God* has as full, and as absolute *Power*, to make what *Kind of Vessels* he pleases out of the yet *unform'd Mass* of Mankind, as the *Potter* has out of his yet *unshapen Clay*? This indeed is an *Inference* which the Words *will bear*; but does not suit with the above *Objection*, which does not relate to the *Justice* of *God* in *Creation* (which was not the *Thing* in *Debate*), but to his *Wisdom* and *Justice* in *dealing* with hardened Sinners, and that have been *hardened*, as the *Objection* supposes, by his own *irresistible Will*. This is plainly the *Point* the *Apostle* is here upon, and for the *Illustration* of which, we must therefore in *Reason* conclude, the *Case* of the *Potter* is here introduced: Which lest we should not be able to *apply* aright, as has in *Fact* been but too much the *Case*, the *Apostle* himself has therefore *apply'd* it for us in the Words which immediately follow, which should be connected with these, as they are in the *original Text*, and read in this *Manner*. *Hath not the Potter Power over the Clay, of the same Lump to make one Vessel to Honour, and another to Dishonour?* (Εἰ ὁ Θεὸς δυνάστης τοῦ πλάστου). *And what if God, being willing to shew his Wrath, and to make his Power known, has endured with much Long-suffering*

*suffering the Vessels of Wrath fitted to (or for) Destruction?* Which Words, well weighed, exhaust the whole Objection, and are indeed the same Answer for Substance with that we have heretofore given, as will clearly appear from the following View of the Sense of them.

Hath not the *Potter*, says the *Apostle*, not God, or the Heavenly Potter, but *the Potter himself*, any common or ordinary Potter, a Power over his *Clay*, to make of the very same *Lump*, if he pleases, one Vessel to *Honour*, for comely and honourable Purposes; and another, if he pleases, to *Dis honour*, for Uses less seemly and honourable? Does any Man object against this? Was he ever complain'd of, or found Fault with, for it? And what, therefore, if *God* (that we may argue from the *Less* to the *Greater*, what if he) should be willing to make his *Power* known, not indeed in the very same manner that the *Potter* does with regard to his *Clay*, but in a manner as just, or rather less exceptionable; what if he, being willing to make his *Power* known against such *Vessels of Wrath* as already are fit for *Destruction*, shall endure such Vessels as these with much *Long-suffering*, tho' they should prove to be hardened by this, as *Pharaoh* was, and as it frequently comes to pass that *Sinners* are, and thereby fitted for yet greater *Vengeance*? Is God therefore unjust in enduring them with much

much *Long-suffering*? Does this any way *irresistibly* harden them? or destroy his just Right to *complain* of them? Does he any thing in this Case, that is any way *unfit* or *improper*? Must he forbear to give *Space* for *Repentance*, only because *obstinate* Sinners will often *increase* their *Guilt* by it? May he not, on the contrary, very *justly* find Fault with such *Objects* as these? *Objects* long of his *Mercy* and *Grace*, tho' at last of his merited *Wrath*, yet never till *fit* for Destruction; and seldom or never reserved for *remarkable Vengeance*, till, tho' *fit* for Destruction *before*, they have been nevertheless *endur'd with much Long-suffering*, and the *Gates* of *Repentance* have been still kept *open*, till *Patience*, void of *Hope*, could bear no longer. If it ever be *fit*, that God should *shew* his *Wrath*, can it ever be *fitter* than it is in such Cases as these? What if God, willing therefore to shew his *Wrath*, and to make his *Power* known, has endured with much *Long-suffering* the Vessels of *Wrath* already *fit* for Destruction, tho' with *this Design*, that, if they still continue to *abuse* his *Patience*, they shall suffer more *signally* for it? Has he not an evident Right to do this, and to *find Fault with*, and *punish*, such as thus *abuse* it, when they both *may*, and *ought* to be led to *Repentance* by it?

This is plainly the Sum of the *Apostle's* Argument; and it so intirely enervates the  
above



above *Objection*, as that all further *Reply* to it must be wholly needless. But you will be ready, very likely, to object, Is this all that the *Apostle* intended by bringing in this *Similitude*? See yourself if you can find, that he has really made any more *Use* of it. That *others* indeed have made more of it, is not disputed. But it certainly may justly be asked, *By what Authority*? Or what *Right* they can shew for rejecting the *Application* which the *Apostle* himself has here given us, and substituting *one of their own* in the room of it? For that this is really the *Apostle's* Application of it, does not only appear from the *Connexion* mention'd, from its being evidently brought in as an Answer to the *Jewish* Objection; and from the manifest Agreement of *Phrase* with regard to the *Vessels* here spoken of; but also in that, without this *Connexion*, the Sense of the Words is *imperfect*. For, *What if God willing to do this or that*, is in itself a lame and an *imperfect* Sentence, and such as calls for a *Supply* to it from the *Verse* preceding, in order to perfect and complete the *Sense* of it: Whereas add but the Words here made use of concerning the Potter, *Hath he not Power to do so or so?* and the Sense is perfectly complete at once: *Hath not the Potter Power over the Clay, to make Vessels to Honour, or Dishonour?* And what therefore if God, being willing to shew *his* Wrath, and to make *his* Power known,

known, has endured with *much Long-suffering* the Vessels of Wrath that were *fitted before* for Destruction? Has he not as *equitable* a Power to do this, as the Power you grant to the *Potter* over his *Clay*? Has he not a Right to shew his *Wrath*, and to make his *Power* known on *hardened Sinners*, whom he has endured with *much Long-suffering*, and which the *Scripture* teaches us to *account Salvation* (a), tho' it be *justly* likewise a Cause of *greater Ruin*, where Men continue to *slight* and *abuse* it?

If it be still said, that the *Similitude* of the *Potter* is capable of proving a great deal more than this; I answer, Suppose it be. The Question is not concerning the *Uses* which possibly *may* be made of it; but concerning the *Use* which the *Apostle* here *has* made of it. Be it therefore, that the *Case* of the *Potter* may be *capable* of yielding such an *Inference* as you would draw from it: It is, however, plain, that the *Apostle* himself makes no more *Use* of it, than to shew the *Wisdom* and *Justice* of God in *finding Fault* with such as are *hardened* by the *Abuse* of much *Long-suffering*, and in making his *Power* more *signally* known, for that Cause, in their *utter Destruction*. Nor is indeed reasonable to be too confident in drawing *Inferences*, where we have not the *Scripture* to support and bear us out in them. It is a very common and just

(a) 2 Pet. iii. 15.

*Observation*, that *Similitudes* very seldom hold in *all Points*; and that we should therefore always be *careful* not to *strain* the Sense of them by carrying the *Comparison* to too great a *Length*. When our Lord draws a Comparison between God and an *unjust Judge* (b); or compares his own *coming*, as he does more than once, to a *Thief* (c), will you say the Comparisons ought to hold *throughout*? Or will you take for Example, the Case of the *unjust Steward* (d)? Too strict a Comparison, you will find, will spoil the *Moral*, and turn the *Inference* quite from what it should be. There is therefore a *Caution* to be used in applying *Similitudes*, which are not to be explain'd according to a *luxuriant Fancy*, which would frequently lead us into many and dangerous *Errors*; but, as *Chrysostom* justly observes, *Comparisons are only to be made use of for the End for which they are brought, and nothing further*. Had this been considered, the *Power* of the *Potter* had never been make so *dreadful*, nor had an *innocent Simile* been racked and tortured in order to draw Inferences from it as highly *injurious* to God, as they are *sad* and *doleful* to the Sons of Men. What! is there no *Difference* to be made between a Lump of *insensible Clay*, and a *conscious intelligent Being* made after the *Image of God*? Is there no Difference between *Earthen-ware* and *kuman*

(b) Luke xviii. 1. &c. (c) Rev. iii. 3. and xvi. 15.  
(d) Luke xvi. 1. &c.



*Nature?* or between the *sensible Suffering* of eternal Fire, and the *dishonourable Use* that may be made of an *earthen Vessel*? If the *Light* that is in us is really *too dark* to see this, *how great*, to refer to the Words of our Lord, *is that Darkness!* But surely every one, on a *little Reflection*, must easily see the wide and mighty *Difference*; and that therefore such Inferences *ought not*, and cannot be *reasonably* drawn from the *innocent Power* which a *Potter* has over his *Clay*, and which therefore is *innocent*, not merely because it is *his*, but because it is only a *senseless* and a *vile Material*, and therefore of little Importance, let him form it for what Uses he will.

Had the Scripture indeed *gone before us* in drawing *such* Inferences, or Inferences a thing *like these*, there had then been some Shadow of Reason for such a Proceeding. But as this is not the Case, it is certainly too much Presumption to go about to be *wise* so very much *beyond*, or rather so *contrary* to, what *is written*. For does either the *Apostle* here draw any such Conclusions? or does *God* himself, when he makes use of the same *Similitude*, and to which the *Apostle* seems here to allude, as it stands upon Record in the Prophet *Jeremy* (e)? *The Word*, says he, *which came to Jeremiah from the Lord, saying, Arise, and go down to the Potter's House, and there will I cause thee to hear my*

(e) Jer. xviii. 1. &amp;c.

Words.

*Words. Then I went down to the Potter's House; and, behold, he wrought a Work upon the Wheels. And the Vessel that he made of Clay was marred in the Hand of the Potter; so he made it again another Vessel, as seemed good to the Potter to make it. Then the Word of the Lord came to me, saying, O House of Israel, cannot I do with you as this Potter? saith the Lord. Behold, as the Clay is in the Potter's Hand, so are ye in mine Hand, O House of Israel. That is, marred like the Vessel that had just been mentioned, and as much at my Disposal to be treated as I shall see good, as that was to be made again another Vessel, as seemed good to the Potter to make it. Here is nothing like an absolute lawless Power claimed, but only of dealing as he should see good with them. And how that was, or how he would exercise this Power towards them, is expressly declared, in the Words which are there subjoined, to be only a treating them according to their Conduct; that where he had denounced Evil, Repentance should turn it away; or promised Good, that Sin should keep it from them. We find it likewise made use of by the Author of Ecclesiasticus: As the Clay, says he, is in the Potter's Hand, to fashion it at his Pleasure; so Man is in the Hand of him that made him, to render to them as liketh him best, or, as it is in the Greek, according to his Judgment (f). It is therefore going a great deal too far to*

(f) Ecclus. xxxiii. 13.

draw the horrid Conclusions which some Men have from this, without so much as one *Precedent* throughout all the Scripture; nay, where the Scripture itself draws none but *mild* Conclusions, and such as all Men must at once assent to, inferring no more than a *just* and *righteous* Power, not of *making* of Creatures either for Wrath or Mercy, there being no such Inference as this drawn from it; but of *dealing* with Creatures on such *Terms* as himself shall see proper, *who is righteous in all his Ways, and holy in all his Works* (g); which the *Apostle* having throughly *justified* with regard to the *Vessels of Wrath*, upon which the Objection was built, was therefore under no *Obligation* of proceeding further. But as in the *Similitude* of the *Potter* he had made mention of *two* kinds of *Vessels*, some to *Honour*, and others to *Dis-honour*; so does he also, in his *Application* of it, not only take notice of *Vessels of Wrath*, but also of *Vessels of Mercy*. As the *Potter* has an evident Power over the *Clay*, to make *Vessels* to *Honour*, or *Dis-honour*; so has God, says he, a Right to make his Power known upon *Vessels of Wrath*, which he has endured with *much Long-suffering*, and who have thereby been *hardened*, and fitted for *signal Destruction*; and also, as he goes on, to make known the *Riches of his Glory on the Vessels of Mercy, which he had afore prepared unto Glory*.



It should here be observed, that the *Vessels of Wrath* are not said to be *fitted* by God, nor is he described as being any way active in fitting of them, for *Destruction*; but only as *enduring* them with much *Long-suffering*, that were *fit* for *Destruction* before: But, with regard to the *Vessels of Mercy*, the Case is *different*; his Spirit, Grace, and Gospel, *all concur* to fit and *prepare* such Vessels as these for *Glory*. What if God, willing to shew his *Wrath*, and to make his *Power* known, endured with much *Long-suffering* the *Vessels of Wrath* fitted unto *Destruction*? And that he might make known the *Riches of his Glory* on the *Vessels of Mercy*, which he had afore prepared unto *Glory*? Has he not a most evident Right, in either or both these Cases, either to shew his *Wrath* on *Vessels of Wrath*; or the *Riches of his Glory* on *Vessels of Mercy*? And how indeed can this be done *more strongly*, than by the very dealing so *unjustly* complained of, the *raising up* or *enduring* the *Vessels of Wrath* with much *Long-suffering*? which, as it gives him the most *unexceptionable* Opportunity to shew his *avenging Power*; so does it at the same time afford us the most *clear* Demonstration how *great* must be the *Riches of his Grace* to the *Vessels of Mercy*, who can endure even *Vessels of Wrath* with such *Long-suffering*. What if, besides the making known his *Wrath* and *Power*, he has also a Mind by the very same *Proceeding* to answer

swēr likewise another and further End, even the *Manifestation* of the *Riches* of his *Glory* on the *Vessels of Mercy*, which he has *afore prepared*, or as some perhaps would rather have it render'd, and as it is, tho' improperly, in *Eph. ii. 10.* has *fore-appointed* or *ordained to Glory*; to wit, all such *Children of Promise* as are *obedient* to him that *calls* them, and are *born* to him by *Faith* in his *Word*? Even us, as the *Apostle* goes on, *whom he hath called*, not of the *Jews* only, but also of the *Gentiles*: As he saith also in *Osee*, *I will call them my People*, which were not my *People*; and her *Beloved*, which was not *belov- ed*; And it shall come to pass, that in the *Place* where it was said unto them, *Ye are not my People*; there shall they be called the *Children of the living God*.

It is here debated by *Interpreters*, concerning whom these Words are spoken. Some will have them to be meant of the *Jews*; and others again understand them as a *Prediction* of the *Conversion* of the *Gentiles*. In the mean time, it is not to be denied, but that the Words in *Hosea*, in their primary Signification, plainly seem to relate to the *Jews*: Nor is it to be denied, at the same time, but that they here seem to be applied to the *Gentiles*. Nor indeed do the *Jews* themselves so confine these Words to their own *Place* and *Nation*, but that they freely allow they have likewise respect to the *Gentiles*: As when they tell us in their *Gloss* on the

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the *Talmud* (b), *They who were not of my People shall adhere to the Lord, and be to me for a People*, according to that of the Prophet *Zeebary*, ii. 11. *And many Nations shall adhere to the Lord in that Day, and shall be my People*. But as a more accurate Settling of this is a Matter of no great Importance, and such as makes nothing either for, or against, the present Argument, it may be sufficient to observe, that after another Quotation or two from the Prophet *Isaiab*, which, tho' spoken of *former Times*, were yet exceedingly applicable to the State of Affairs at *that time*, the *Chapter closes*, as was before observed, with the same Doctrine of the *Righteousness of Faith*, which has been so zealously pleaded for in it, and which is indeed the *principal Drift* of the whole *Epistle*.

It will not perhaps be amiss to reflect in this Place, that whatever the *Apostle* has all along said in this *Chapter*, is evidently, all of it, of a *temporal Nature*. Such was the Rejection of *Ishmael*, and the choosing *Isaac*; the loving *Jacob*, and the hating *Esau*; such the Mercy that was shewn to the transgressing *Israelites*, concerning whom God yet sware in his Wrath *they should not enter into his Rest*; such the shewing his Power in the Destruction that fell upon *Pharaoh*; and such likewise was that which then hung, tho' deferr'd by God's Goodness, over the Heads of the infidel *Jews*. He no-where sends us to the

(b) See Whitby in locum.



*other World*, where God does not *at present* make his Power known to us; but all along reasons from Facts that were done in *this World*, upon which his *Premises* are always grounded, tho' his *Inferences* from them extend, as we have seen, to the *other*.

But having followed him far enough now to see his *Meaning* in what have always been reckoned the *gloomiest* Parts of the *Chapter*; let us here, if you please, sit down, and *count our Gains*. We have been clearing, then, a Portion of *Scripture*, not only from great *Obscurity*, but from the *Odium* of a *Doctrine*, which, if really taught by it, must reflect not a little Dishonour on Christianity :  
 —A Doctrine that has set the great *Father of Mercies* in the most dreadful and terrible Light, that can well be conceived or imagined;  
 —that has represented the Great, *the Blessed and Only Potentate*, as a surly, lawless, unrelenting Tyrant, designing for, and ordain-  
 to, *eternal Destruction*, the greatest Part of his reasonable Creatures, for no other Reason than because he will :—A Doctrine that always *did*, and still does, give great *Offence* to by far the greater Part of the *Christian Church*; — which the Infidel is frequently harping on, and making no small Plea for his *Infidelity*; — which runs counter to the *natural Notions* of all Mankind, and gives the Lye to the sacred Voice of *Conscience*; — which even its *Friends* can hardly help being *shocked* at, when set before them in its *proper Colours*; — and which they can never de-  
 fend

send But by Positions of such a Nature, as sap the Credit of all *Revelation*, subvert the whole *Scheme* of the *Gospel*, and raise such *horrid Terrors* in the *Mind*, as have often produced the most *dismal* and *fatal* Effects.

But it is not all the Advantage we have gained, to have removed this *flaming Sword* from the Gates of *Paradise*. We have not only seen, that God does not *make* Vessels of *Wrath*, but that he also does not *harden* those that have *made themselves* so, any otherwise than by *enduring* them with *much Long-suffering*: And that there is therefore always room, while the *Forbearance* of God continues, for *Vessels of Wrath* to be changed into *Vessels of Mercy*, and those of *Dis honour* to come to be *Vessels of Honour* (i).

We have likewise seen, that the *Covenant* made with *Abram*, and the *Promises* of it, in the *fullest Sense* of them, were never *confined* only to those that should *naturally* spring from him, but extended in every Age to *all the Faithful*; and that it ever *was*, and ever *will be true*, whatever the puffed up *Jew* may think to the contrary, that God *is*, and always *was*, not only *the God of the Jews*, but, as *St. Paul* has told us, *of the Gentiles also* (k); and that, in every *Nation*, to refer to the Words of *St. Peter*, *he that fears him, and works Righteousness, is accepted with him* (l); that the *Christian Religion* does not give us those *narrow Ideas* of the *Great, Supreme, and Universal Father*, as some, both *Friends* and *Enemies*, would represent it; but that it really ex-

(i) 2 Tim. ii. 20, 21. (k) Rom. iii. 29. (l) Acts x. 34, 35.

hibits him in the most glorious and amiable Light, and even a great deal more so than mere Reason can do.

Lift up therefore the *Hands* which hang down, and the feeble *Knees*; and shout your *Praises* to your great *Creator*, the *Greatest*, *Wiseſt*, and the *Beſt* of Beings; the *Father* of *Mercies*, and *Author* of all *Conſolation* (m); *Who would have all Men to be ſaved, and to come to the Knowledge of the Truth* (n); and who has over and over *aſſerted*, and ſolemnly *ſworn*, that he is not one that has *Pleaſure* in *Death*, or that takes a *Delight* in *Deſtruction*; no, not even in that of the *Wicked*, but had rather they would *repent*, and *turn from their Ways*, and *live* (o). It is the glorious Character he gave of himſelf to *Moſes*, that he was *gracious, and merciful, long-ſuffering, and abundant in Goodneſs* (p). And the ſame is confirmed to us not only throughout his *Word*, but all his *Providence* proclaims it likewise. *Nature* and *Scripture* join in this their *Suffrage*, and both proclaim aloud the *joyful Truth*. Praise him therefore, *all his Creatures*: Praise him, *all ye Sons of Men*. He *reigns*; and therefore, *Let the Earth rejoice: Let all the Multitude of the Iſles be glad* (q). Let all unite, and join the ſolemn Song; *Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive Glory, and Honour, and Power; for thou haſt created all things, and for thy Pleaſure they are, and were created* (r).

(m) Rom. xv. 5. (n) 1 Tim. ii. 4. (o) Ezek. xviii. 23, 32, and xxxiii. 11. (p) Exod. xxxiv. 6. (q) Pf. xcvi. (r) Rev. iv. ult.





